Career identities and Millennials' response to the graduate transition to work: lessons learned

Boyle, Kathryn A.

Published in:
Journal of Education and Work

DOI:
10.1080/13639080.2021.2009782

Publication date:
2021

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Education and Work

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjew20

Career identities and Millennials' response to the graduate transition to work: lessons learned

Kathryn A. Boyle

To cite this article: Kathryn A. Boyle (2021): Career identities and Millennials' response to the graduate transition to work: lessons learned, Journal of Education and Work, DOI: 10.1080/13639080.2021.2009782

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2021.2009782

Published online: 26 Nov 2021.

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND WORK
https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2021.2009782

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Career identities and Millennials' response to the graduate transition to work: lessons learned

Kathryn A. Boyle

Department of Management and HRM, Glasgow School for Business and Society, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

ABSTRACT

This article answers the call for more research on Millennials' experience of the graduate transition to work (GTW). Using an identity perspective, it investigates how Millennials explored and developed their career identities after the GTW, with a particular focus on traits often associated with younger generations such as boundaryless, protean and intrinsic motivations. Interviews were conducted with 36 Millennial graduates from U.k. and Irish universities. Findings confirmed that graduates largely avoided identity exploration until the GTW, with the latter perceived as a boundary experience and self-learning event. Four main themes of identity work developed from the data analysis: restraining the ideal self; reasserting the ideal self; revising the ideal self; and re-exploring possible selves. Participants appeared to increase their adaptability, self-drive and intrinsic motivation after the GTW in a way different from previous generations. Moreover, they continued to develop and change their career-identities long after the first few transitional years. Implications for Higher Education and organisational practice are accordingly discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 22 June 2021
Accepted 19 November 2021

KEYWORDS
Career identity; Millennials; graduate transition to work; identity work

Introduction

While the links between work experience, graduate employability (Gbadamosi et al. 2019), and vocational or occupational identity (Stringer and Kerpelman 2014) have been well documented, the link between work experience and career identity exploration is less well known. Career identity comprises 'the career aspirations, values and beliefs that inform our self-concept which enable us to answer the question "who am I"' (Lysova et al. 2015, 40). It transcends vocational and occupational identity and encompasses our overarching career values and motivations (McArdle et al. 2007). The concept of career identity can be useful in the modern context where organisations no longer routinely offer lifetime employment and where individuals might have several different occupations throughout their career (Meijers and Lengelle 2012). Career identity is also useful to educational institutions that aim to prepare early career individuals (Arthur, Khapova, and Richardson 2016), particularly in supporting students' exploration of possible selves through identity work (Hoyer 2020). Identity work refers to 'forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness' (Alvesson 2010, 201). According to Brown 2015, 299), identity work 'emphasizes agency and processual issues'. Arguably, however, many young people today avoid or postpone proactive identity exploration (Anderson and Mounts 2012; Laughland-Booy, Newcombe, and Skrbis 2017). Due to the lengthening of post-secondary education and delayed entry to the graduate transition to work (GTW), exploration is a

CONTACT Kathryn A. Boyle Kate.Boyle@gcu.ac.uk Glasgow School for Business and Society, Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow, Scotland, U.K. G4 0BA

more drawn-out process than for previous generations (Johnson and Monserud 2012). Accordingly, this paper seeks to investigate the critical role of the GTW in the career identity exploration of modern-day graduates, specifically Millennials.

The impact of research into generational differences lies in underpinning the formulation of organisational policies around employee recruitment, engagement and retention (Lyons and Kuron 2014). Despite divergent opinions on the demarcation of cohorts (Parry and Urwin 2011), Millennials (or Generation Y) are generally categorised as those born between 1980 and 2000. Extant generational studies have largely measured the work attitudes and values of undergraduates or graduates about to enter the workplace (Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons 2010; Twenge 2010; Luscombe, Lewis, and Biggs 2013; Maxwell and Broadbridge 2017). Yet it has long been argued that in the GTW a 'reshaping of identity' occurs (Nicholson and Arnold 1991, 414). Indeed, studies on older generations such as Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964) and Generation X (born 1965–1979) suggest that work values change across the GTW (e.g. Jin and Rounds 2012; Krahn and Galambos 2014). Thus, organisational strategies based on extant generational studies may stand on precarious foundations.

While some limited progress has been made in exploring Millennials' experience of the GTW (e.g. Maxwell and Broadbridge 2014), Kuron et al. (2015) acknowledge the need for more investigation, adding only retrospective data can be used given Millennials have already undergone the transition. Furthermore, research is required to consider reputed Millennial traits. Millennials are said to engage in boundaryless (Laird, Harvey, and Lancaster 2015) and protean careers (Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden 2007). Indeed, boundaryless (high levels of psychological adaptability and physical mobility) and protean values (self-driven career management based on self-awareness) persist as ways of describing contemporary career orientations (Hoyer 2020). Complementarily, Millennials are said to be guided by intrinsic motivation (Queiri et al. 2014), such as finding enjoyable work (Maxwell and Broadbridge 2017). The added implications of boundaryless and protean careers for continual career identity development, however, have yet to be explored (Hoyer 2020).

Accordingly, this article first answers the call for more research on Millennials' experience of the GTW using retrospective data. It does so by investigating Millennials' self-perceptions of how they responded to the GTW in exploring and developing their career identity, with a particular focus on traits often associated with younger generations such as boundaryless, protean and intrinsic motivations. Second, it elucidates what a Millennial response to the GTW looks like compared with extant research on previous generations. Third, it considers proactive and avoidant approaches to career identity exploration, with implications for Higher Education strategy. Fourth, it reviews the assumed stability of Millennials' career identity over time, with implications for organisational strategy.

Stability and fluidity in the development of career identities

Identity scholars have long debated whether individuals discover in themselves a stable and true identity, or whether they construct and reconstruct a fluid identity as continually reworked throughout their lifetime (Brown 2015). On one hand, some might understand career identities as stable selves or self-concepts (e.g. Hoekstra 2011; Lysova et al. 2015; Garrison, Lee, and Ali 2017). It is this constant and unique personality or 'compass' (Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth 2004; McArdle et al. 2007) which allows individuals to change career direction and navigate themselves through uncertain labour markets, yet still stay true to a sense of self. Such a perspective fits neatly with generational studies based on cohort (e.g. Ryder 1965) or social identity (e.g. Mannheim 1952) perspectives wherein generational career values and motivations are assumed to be stable. On the other hand, some might understand career identity as fluid and dynamic, constructed and reconstructed through time as inherently reflected in individuals' changes in career and social environments (e.g. Bosley, Arnold, and Cohen 2009; LaPointe 2010; Meijers and Lengelle 2012).

Attempts have been made to reconcile the notions of continuity and change in career identity by conceptualising identities as personal narratives (e.g. Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010). In maintaining identities, individuals strive to reduce inconsistencies (Brown 2015) and forge a self-concept which

holds continuity over time (Adams and Marshall 1996; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). Career identity narratives allow people to connect disparate career experiences under an overarching storyline based on holistic life values (Hoyer 2020). Career narratives are thus ruled by broader life themes (McIlveen and Patton 2007). Accordingly, career identity involves 'an understanding of one's past, present, future work experiences that incorporates longer-term occupational experiences' (Atewologun et al. 2017, 279). There are individuals, however, who experience liminality instead (Budtz-Jørgensen, Johnsen, and Sorensen 2019): a constant state of being in between identity positions, forging and re-forging temporary identities. Furthermore, changing job roles often (such as in boundaryless careers) can lead to the development of 'liminality competence' (Borg and Söderlund 2015) wherein liminality is embraced as a positive form of freedom. In effect, therefore, instead of discovering the essence of oneself, 'people construct a theory about who they *think* they are and what they *think* they want' at certain moments in time, being open to alternative selves (Berzonsky 2011, 57).

Exploring career identity

Schein (1978, 170) reconciles stability and fluidity by emphasising that 'career anchors' are indeed set, but only after 'successive trials' experienced in the transition from school to work. Accordingly, identity exploration is a learning event (Meijers and Lengelle 2012) involving playing with possible selves (Markus and Nerius 1986; Ibarra. 1999; Ibarra and Petriglieri 2010). Many identity scholars have theorised on the concept of exploration and its positive or negative outcomes. For instance, Marcia (1966) discussed achievement (exploration followed by commitment to an identity), moratorium (exploration without commitment), foreclosure (commitment without exploration), and diffusion (neither exploration nor commitment). Luyckx et al. (2011) further integrated concepts of breadth and depth. Where there is commitment, there is exploration in depth. However, where there is a lack of commitment, it can prompt further exploration in breadth.

There are some studies which link ongoing exploration with negative emotions (e.g. Luyckz and Robitschek 2014; Praskova, Creed, and Hood 2015). Thus Luyckx and Beyers (2015) discuss ruminative exploration, where people are hesitant or indecisive, never coming to a firm sense of identity. Likewise, Berzonsky highlights the difference between informational processors who 'intentionally seek out, process, and utilize identity-relevant information' and diffuse-avoidant processors who are 'reluctant to confront and face up to identity' (Berzonsky 2011, 55). Accordingly, there are those who intentionally explore their identity, and those who do not (Dunkel and Lavoie 2005). Work experience is particularly seen as a key precondition for career identity exploration, both in breadth and depth (Stringer and Kerpelman 2014). Breadth can mean having many different kinds of jobs, while depth, having work experiences specifically relevant to a chosen career. However, studies have shown that emerging adults experience delayed entry to fulltime work (Johnson and Monserud 2012) and do not always use work experience well in career identity exploration (Anderson and Mounts 2012; Laughland-Booy, Newcombe, and Skrbis 2017). Thus, Arnett (2000) speaks of emerging adulthood wherein those in their early and late twenties are still engaged in identity exploration.

Developing career identity and generational responses to the GTW

In exposing graduates to fulltime work, not only is the GTW useful for identity exploration, but also identity development. Nicholson's (1987) Transition Cycle describes how individuals progress through four phases. First, the preparation or anticipation phase includes readiness for change, i.e. graduating and looking towards fulltime work. Second, in the encounter phase, the individual experiences shocks, surprises, and sense-making in their new working environment. Third, in the adjustment phase, they engage in 'the reshaping of identity to fit the new environment' (Nicholson and Arnold 1991, 414). Fourth, in the stabilisation phase, they settle in until future encounters/adjustments are experienced.

In the anticipation phase, there is an assumption that individuals are heavily influenced by their existing expectations (Hurst and Good 2009). Critically, these expectations can be unrealistic, especially in the case of Millennials (Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons 2010; Lyons, Ng, and Schweitzer 2012; Krahn and Galambos 2014; Maxwell and Broadbridge 2017). Key features of the U.k. graduate labour market which Millennials have to contend with are the oversupply of graduates, underemployment, relatively lower starting salaries, and the expectation that individuals take prime responsibility for their own employability (Tomlinson 2012; Okay-Somerville and Scholarios 2014; Maxwell and Broadbridge 2017). This may prompt doubt regarding the return on investment from their degree (Tymon 2013). In the encounter phase, therefore, the GTW stimulates a dialogue between an individual's initial expectations and reality (Nicholson and Arnold 1991). Herein, individuals seek to solve dilemmas caused by a disjuncture between their ideal self and their real self in a new environment (e.g. Beech 2017). Such 'boundary experiences' (Buhler and Allen 1972) often involve emotional cues, prompting individuals to engage in self-dialogue to reconcile discontinuities between their ideal and real self. Most commonly, negative emotions signal to individuals that there is a crisis, prompting identity doubt and perhaps further exploration (Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence 2013). It is Nicholson and Arnold (1991) view that such encounters ultimately lead to disillusionment, and consequently adjustment.

More specifically, Nicholson (1987) argues that either the individual goes through personal development (where they change themselves to suit their role), or role development (where they change the role to suit themselves). Due to Nicholson's (1987) focus on organisational socialisation and assumptions around the relative inexperience of young graduates, he suggested graduates would lean towards personal development. However, Ashforth and Saks (1995) concluded some graduates tended towards determination where they preserved their own identity by changing work roles to suit themselves. Moreover, individuals may undergo adjustment differently in accordance with their generation's worldview (Jin and Rounds 2012; Kuron et al. 2015).

A few key studies have investigated generational effects during the GTW. Jin and Rounds (2012) participants' attitudes became more realistic after the GTW with a decrease in intrinsic motivation and increase in extrinsic motivation, remaining relatively stable thereafter. They further concluded that Baby Boomers had more stable work values across the GTW than Generation X had. Johnson and Monserud (2012) also found that high school leavers between 1976 and 1990 became more realistic and selective of work values after the GTW, with younger cohorts experiencing more significant changes. Both studies suggest that younger cohorts had higher expectations in the anticipation phase and subsequently found the GTW more critical in grounding themselves. Thus, disillusionment led to personal development (e.g. Nicholson 1987).

In contrast, however, Krahn and Galambos (2014) concluded intrinsic motivation increased for participants over time. They found the increase was greater for Millennials than it was for Generation X. This again suggests the GTW is more critical for successive generations, but perhaps with increasing determination instead. Conversely, Kuron et al. (2015) found that Millennials' work values were relatively stable over time, concluding their results show a generation-specific response to the GTW – that unlike previous generations, Millennials have relatively stable work values over the GTW. Relatedly, Maxwell and Broadbridge (2017) found that Millennials were intent to look for job enjoyment at both career entry and long term career stages.

Yet literature on career development emphasises fluidity throughout a person's entire career, not just after the GTW. Super (1980) formulated that careers are constructed through mini-cycles of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Savickas (2012) further emphasised that such cycles are especially recurrent with individuals who have unpredictable career paths. This may be particularly relevant for Millennials who are said to change jobs more often than previous generations. Correspondingly, cyclical identity status models are predicated on individuals continually reconfiguring new identities through processes of exploration, testing, reflection, and commitment, e.g. Grotevant (1987) and Luyckx et al. (2011). As an individual matures, they are likely to go

through several stages of self-exploration, building up a wider set of life experiences which help them re-evaluate value sets and their outcomes on a continual basis (Hansen and Leuty 2012; Kuron et al. 2015).

Consequently, in light of the few and inconsistent results from extant research, this study set out to investigate how Millennial graduates responded to the GTW as they explored and developed their career identities, with particular reference to those characteristics which are often categorised as Millennial traits – boundaryless, protean and intrinsic motivation.

Methodology

Sampling

The sample included Millennial participants born 1980 to 1995 (N = 36). Due to the exploratory nature of the study, non-probability sampling was undertaken by recruiting participants through LinkedIn and university graduate social media sites. Approval for the project was given by the Ethics Research Committee at Glasgow Caledonian University. To increase the variableness of the sample, participants were recruited who had completed undergraduate degrees in business, management, computing, arts and social science disciplines from U.K. and Irish universities. At the time of interview, participants worked in a variety of U.K. job sectors: education (n = 8); finance (n = 5); IT (n = 5); public services (n = 4); returning student to fulltime Higher Education (n = 4); marketing (n = 3); hospitality (n = 3); business (n = 2); and transport (n = 2). Equal numbers of genders were sought: 18 participants self-identified as women (W1-W18) and 18 as men (M1-M18), both with a median birth date of 1988. Participants were asked to describe their cultural identities in their own words. Most cited British-based cultures such as 'British', 'English', 'Scottish', and/or 'Welsh' (n = 34), with one participant describing their culture as 'Multinational' (n = 1) and one as 'Western' (n = 1). Within the British category, seven participants noted additional cultural identities, i.e. 'American', 'Asian', 'European', 'Irish' 'Italian', 'Pakistani', and 'Western European' (n = 7). Interviewees were sought who had varying numbers of years since graduating to capture the short and long term effects of career identity exploration and development after the GTW: 1–5 years (n = 18); 6–10 years (n = 12); 11–15 years (n = 6).

Data collection

Given Millennials have already experienced the GTW, retrospective accounts were utilised. In such cases, there are risks that participants might not recall or could exaggerate responses (e.g. Manzoni et al. 2010). Nonetheless, it was of axiological importance to give participants voice to express their experiences and self-perceptions of change and identity work. Open descriptive questions were used to elicit contextual answers rooted in participants' own experiences. First, participants were asked to recount their own career stories from school, through to university, the GTW and beyond to the present time, thus listing sequences of events, challenges, decisions, and turning points (e.g. Okay-Somerville and Scholarios 2014). Second, interview questions asked if participants felt they had changed their adaptability (boundaryless), self-drive (protean), or intrinsic motivation after the GTW. In follow up questions, the researcher referred back to the participants' careers stories to confirm when and how any critical incidents occurred.

Data analysis

The coding was conducted utilising Lincoln and Guba (1985) guidelines for thematic analysis and criteria for trustworthiness. Credibility and confirmability were achieved through prolonged engagement (e.g. exploration of participants' career stories), follow-up questions to confirm the researcher's understanding, transcription, and memo-writing. Memo-writing helped to develop descriptive open

codes. Through constant comparison, these codes were then explored with subsequent participants and tested through the gathering of alternative explanations, with the researcher moving back and forth between old and new interview scripts. The data was thus collected and analysed simultaneously to drive theoretical and negative case sampling for transferability and dependability. Altogether, this resulted in thick descriptions and exploration. Axial coding brought open codes into themes which were named as gerunds to succinctly denote participants' active identity work. To preserve participants' voices and the grounding of data as far as possible, theoretical sensitivity was delayed until after 23 interviews were completed and the four main themes had developed. With inductive coding, the role of literature is to assist researchers in making comparisons between findings and extant theory. Various theoretical perspectives as outlined above were accordingly considered, without forcing an interpretation of one or the other.

Findings and discussion

Analysis demonstrated that participants responded to the GTW by exploring and developing their career identities in four main ways: restraining the ideal self; reasserting the ideal self; revising the ideal self; and re-exploring possible selves. Participants generally acknowledged marked development in their career identities after the GTW, specifically with regard to boundaryless, protean and intrinsic motivations.

Restraining the ideal self

First, some participants delineated the development of their career identity by plotting their position on an anticipated career trajectory. They made distinctions between short and long term expectations. Soon after graduating, some interviewees were preoccupied with finding *a* job, rather than *the* job, in a tough economic climate and competitive graduate labour market. Therefore, they temporarily restrained their ideal selves:

> '. . . it's that mix of when you first start looking for work between getting something wonderful and just getting something to get you started. And I think I just wanted to get a job when I started so what it was like would be a benefit as opposed to a core need, requirement of going for a job. Whereas now, you've kind of got more luxury to choose a job that's going to make you a bit more happy.' (W16, 15 years a graduate)

Accordingly, some participants' initial expectations could be low and short sighted, reflecting personal development to fit the context (Nicholson 1987). However, as their careers progressed, their expectations became higher, reflecting nuanced fluctuations in their intrinsic drive – and ultimately determination (Ashforth and Saks 1995). Increased intrinsic motivation was coupled with increases after the GTW in boundaryless and protean behaviours – the adaptability and self-drive to look for alternative jobs which fitted individual expectations better. Previous research suggests that post-secondary education engenders idealistic work values (e.g. Jin and Rounds 2012) and that Millennials look for job enjoyment at both initial career entry and long term career stages (Maxwell and Broadbridge 2017). The present study shows, however, that Millennial traits such as boundaryless, protean and intrinsic motivations could fluctuate through time, or increase the longer career journeys were established.

Reasserting the ideal self

Second, participants reflected on their feelings of shock in the encounter phase (e.g. Nicholson 1987). Some graduates initially attempted to enact their ideal career identity and this jarred with their experienced career identity. Participants often spoke of their past selves as being naive, e.g. 'I was naïve 5 years ago' (M9) and how the GTW made them 'realise' (W13) differently. Thus, graduates came to reflect how their previous identity exploration lacked realistic value – that pre-graduate

work experience had ill-prepared them as an indicator of what fulltime graduate work would be like. Some graduates spoke of disillusionment. The oversupply of graduates was referenced as well as the continued effects of the economic downturn (e.g. Maxwell and Broadbridge 2017). The contrast between their imagined and experienced graduate career was therefore sharp, arousing strong emotions:

> 'Then the financial crash hit and all of the jobs disappeared and that gloriously optimistic, some might say naïve, bubble was burst in the most kind of violent way and we still haven't recovered from that even though it was 10 years ago.' (W5, 4 years a graduate)

Heightening their emotional response, participants also expressed feelings of being deceived by school guidance councillors, university lecturers, and politicians. Some participants felt resentment around their status as university graduates. Thus, M10 referred to being 'sold a lie' as a key aspect of being a graduate, while M7 felt 'betrayed by the government, by employers'. Likewise, W6 continued:

> ' . . . in society, you are kind of built up – if you go to university you will get a job, and I think that is very false information and I think it's quite sad. So you have to go to university if you want a better job and then they graduate and they have to spend the next two years thinking "I've done all this - four years - for nothing"' (W6, 3 years a graduate)

In contrast to what Nicholson (1987) might expect, however, experiencing disillusionment resulted in some graduates actually increasing their intrinsic motivation. W6's story illustrates the inadequacy of pre-graduate work experience, and the shift from restraining the ideal self to reasserting the ideal self:

> 'I never thought I could hate doing something so much, that when I took it I thought "it really doesn't matter, I don't care", and then six months down the line I'm thinking "I cannot do this – I cannot pick another job I do not like because getting up in the morning is just too difficult" . . . I think when you're younger you sort of get your part time jobs and you don't realise quite how much time you will be spending somewhere and how much time it will occupy in your day, so I think after doing that job I just thought "no, I can't, I have to be interested in it now"' (W6, 3 years a graduate)

Similarly, W8 explained reasserting her intrinsic values based on concerns about return on investment which also resulted in an increase in physical mobility when she left her first graduate job for another:

> ' . . . it was a job that didn't require a degree and I just thought I've worked too hard for three years to not gain anything out of it or to be working in this environment.' (W8, 3 years a graduate)

Together, these findings resonate with Buhler and Allen (1972) concept of boundary experiences. They also correspond with literature on the GTW suggesting that graduates can have unrealistic expectations, e.g. Hurst and Good (2009), Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons (2010), experience disillusionment (e.g. Nicholson and Arnold 1991), and question their return on investment (e.g. Tymon 2013). Nonetheless, Nicholson and Arnold (1991) suggest disillusionment results in individuals accepting the constraints of their environment and forming more realistic expectations. Correspondingly, extant research shows that previous generations decreased their intrinsic values after the GTW (e.g. Jin and Rounds 2012). The findings here, however, suggest that a Millennial response to disillusionment could be to increase intrinsic motivation to preserve their ideal career identity (e.g. Ashforth and Saks 1995; Krahn and Galambos 2014), utilising or intensifying complementary Millennial traits such as boundarylessness and protean self-drive.

Revising the ideal self

Third, to compensate for a lack of realistic identity exploration before graduation, participants spoke about using their first few jobs in the GTW as self-learning events through the interpretation of emotional responses. Positive emotions were sometimes referenced as key explanations for revising the ideal self by increasing intrinsic motivation. Participants often spoke about wanting interesting and enjoyable work after learning its personal value in the workplace first. However, graduates also utilised negative emotions to increase their self-awareness and corresponding intrinsic motivation:

> ' . . . I had to get experience and also I had to get experience of what I didn't like either, there were things that I didn't know if I liked or not, whereas now I would probably say I know certain aspects of work that I don't like . . . so maybe that's why obviously I've kind of changed.' (W9, 15 years a graduate)

These findings compare favourably with how Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence (2013) discuss the role of emotion in identity exploration. Participants, however, again stressed the inadequacy of pre-graduate work experience in helping them explore their career identity:

> 'I think that's just to do with self-knowledge. I didn't know, I didn't know what I wanted at all when I first graduated . . . And I also don't think I necessarily knew myself in work very well to know what it was that was important to me. You kind of need enough time in employment to work out who you are in that context . . . It's kind of developmental trajectory in terms of working out who I am . . . I know myself better now, I don't think I knew who I was when I first graduated.' (W5, 4 years a graduate)

Such views correspond with exploration and work experience as being important precursors to identity formation (Berzonsky 2011; Stringer and Kerpelman 2014). Yet, they also demonstrate that participants did not seek out effective exploration until the GTW, reflecting diffusion (e.g. Marcia 1966) and verifying that younger generations tend to experience delayed identity exploration (e.g. Arnett 2000; Anderson and Mounts 2012; Johnson and Monserud 2012; Laughland-Booy, Newcombe, and Skrbis 2017).

One exception was M5, who stated his work values had been relatively stable since the GTW. He revealed he went straight into the building trade after leaving secondary school.

> 'If I didn't have the experience of that work my outlook would be completely different, but while it was horrible, I hated the job, I hated that period of time because I was just so miserable, it's definitely made me the person I am today and I don't want to say I wouldn't change it, but it's definitely helped me today, it drives me today if I'm honest.' (M5, 2 years a graduate)

Experiencing job dissatisfaction as a builder thus drove his self-awareness, intrinsic motivation and self-drive higher. He returned to education and forged another career for himself. M5 was therefore a negative case, undergoing the learning process earlier than his graduate contemporaries – before entering university rather than afterwards. Effectively, M5 had experienced a more traditional school-to-work transition, e.g. Savickas (1999).

Nonetheless, the GTW alone was not sufficient to stimulate exploration for every graduate:

> 'It's probably me that's made it more difficult because I've not been assertive, I've not been as confident to what I want or to figure out what I want to do, so in that respect, that's been difficult.' (W10, 6 years a graduate)

Unlike the other participants, therefore, W10 represented a diffuse-avoidant processor who was 'reluctant to confront and face up to identity' (Berzonsky 2011, 55) and who suffered prolonged rumination (Luyckx and Beyers 2015) even after the GTW.

Re-exploring possible selves

Fourth, as graduates accumulated more experiences beyond the initial GTW, some felt they continued to learn about themselves, developing their career identities on a recurring basis. W17 described comparing her first job to her second, her second to her third, and her third back to her first. She explained that having multiple experiences increased her self-awareness:

> 'I think it was having that time where I wasn't happy in work and then you realise what you do want, and when you have been happy with what you had, and you weren't happy with what you had, and kind of comparing that shows what you do want. And I really enjoy what I do just now . . . I think that's why X might be the career for me . . . I think it's also knowing more about me and I think I learned more about my traits . . . my own personality traits and how they maybe do or don't go with different jobs' (W17, 4 years a graduate)

Comparing experiences could therefore involve reinterpreting past experiences, adding new meaning, and heightening emotional reactions to both past and present experiences. As levels in experience increased, so too did levels of self-awareness:

> 'I feel like every time you do a job you learn something new about yourself'. (W18, 6 years a graduate)

Thus, the prevalence of boundaryless and protean careers for Millennials (Laird, Harvey, and Lancaster 2015) had profound impacts on their development and redevelopment of career identity. Moreover, while participants generally described developmental trajectories towards the discovery of a true self, incongruously, some also sensed their career identities were fluid with a lack of narrative coherence and a degree of liminality:

> 'I think I have a fair idea but I think that's just down to being older and having different experiences, but I'm also aware that it might change . . . ' (W3, 4 years a graduate)

> 'I think I know myself better now than I did when I left uni, just more experience than anything else and maybe a clearer idea of what I want and a more balanced idea of what I want, but I do expect it, I think it would be naïve to say it isn't going to change . . . ' (M9, 5 years a graduate)

In such ways, the learning experience of the GTW could be extended, reflecting Arnett's (2000) view of emerging adulthood and a more drawn-out exploration phase (Johnson and Monserud 2012). Correspondingly, there was an increased acceptance of not one ideal self but various alternative possible selves, and an appreciation for the temporality of self (e.g. Berzonsky 2011). This particularly reflected the mini-cycles of growth and exploration which Super (1980) Savickas (2012) highlight. There were those who showed signs of liminality competence (Borg and Söderlund 2015):

> 'I don't actually know what I want to do yet . . . I don't know if that's a bad thing, it's good that you know you always want something different . . . it's very hard to pigeonhole me and I don't know if that's good or if it's bad but it's obviously who I am and I think it goes into a lot of me' (M11, 13 years a graduate)

For those looking to discover their true self, however, liminality was less positive:

> ' . . . if you come back in ten years' time . . . I'll either know for sure or I'll be even further into the "what do I do now?" in my early 40s' (M16, 11 years a graduate)

> 'I'm definitely looking for a sense of wider existential identity fulfilment out of work which is why I think it's been such a difficult path trying to work out what to do to date . . . ' (W5, 4 years a graduate)

> 'I think that is a big issue overall with my generation, they're always trying to figure out who they are, what they're interested in, and I would say there is only a small percentage of us who are actually doing what we'd like to do. Yeah the majority I think do just keep searching.' (W1, 3 years a graduate)

If identity then is an ongoing project (e.g. Grotevant 1987; Luyckx et al. 2011), particularly within the context of boudaryless and protean careers, the discovery of a true self may be unattainable. It was apparent that some participants had yet to develop a strong sense of narrative to avoid continuing existential crisis, and were in an enduring state of moratorium (e.g. Marcia 1966).

Conclusions and implications

Overall, this article makes four key theoretical contributions. First, the present study has answered Kuron et al.'s (2015) call for more research on Millennials' experience of the GTW. It has utilised qualitative retrospective accounts to demonstrate how Millennials themselves viewed the GTW as a critical incident in their career identity work. This adds to literature by moving the discussion and

research agenda forward from the link between work experience and graduate employability or vocational identity, to one between work experience and career identity exploration and development.

Second, in contrast to Kuron et al. (2015), findings reflect that Millennials experienced the encounter and adjustment phases of Nicholson's (1987) Transition Cycle. This corresponds with previous studies which suggest the GTW is particularly critical for successive generations (e.g. Jin and Rounds 2012; Johnson and Monserud 2012; Krahn and Galambos 2014). Specifically, the findings confirm that participants viewed fulltime work experience and the GTW as a boundary experience (using emotional cues to assess ideal and real selves) as well as a self-learning experience (e.g. Buhler and Allen 1972; Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence 2013).

The current findings demonstrate that many participants tended towards determination, where they reasserted their ideal self (e.g. Ashforth and Saks 1995). Theory suggested graduates would engage after disillusionment in 'the reshaping of identity to fit the new environment' (Nicholson and Arnold (1991, 414) and decrease their intrinsic motivation (Jin and Rounds 2012). Participants here demonstrated fluctuations in their career identity. Most professed to increasing their intrinsic motivation in the long term, in line with findings from Krahn and Galambos (2014). Concurrently, they increased their boundaryless and protean behaviours to enact their intrinsic impulses. It can be argued that each generation experiences maturation in accordance with their generation's world-view (Jin and Rounds 2012; Kuron et al. 2015). If this is the case, the current study shows that the Millennial response to the GTW was not necessarily to succumb to the constraints of their environment as previous generations may have done, but to bolster their idealism. Thus, while Kuron et al. (2015, 1002) note that employers are waiting for Millennials to 'grow up and settle down', this may be a forlorn hope.

Third, findings indicate that Millennials are generally less invested in their pre-graduate jobs and delay critical exploration until they graduate. Thus, as students, they exhibited avoidant approaches to identity exploration (e.g. Berzonsky 2011; Anderson and Mounts 2012; Johnson and Monserud 2012; Laughland-Booy, Newcombe, and Skrbis 2017). Reflecting Arnett (2000), identity exploration was drawn-out. This may help explain some of the difficulties which organisations face in retaining Millennial graduates (see McCracken, Currie, and Harrison 2016). Essentially, organisations are employing graduates who do not know who they are. While the traditional purpose of Higher Education is to further enlightenment and liberal education, the rise of neoliberalism has shifted the sector towards the addition of economic goals in the form of vocationalisation and employability (Sin, Tavares, and Amaral 2019). Indeed, the knowledge economy has driven demand for the HE sector to demonstrate return on investment through graduate career outcomes (Jackson and Bridgstock 2019). Responsively, therefore, it is critical for educational institutions to foster a sense of self-responsibility on the part of students to explore their career identities early. Jackson and Tomlinson (2019) summarise some relevant interventions. Educational institutions can foster reflective writing and student research of roles/industries, as well as include more prominent roles for career services within the curriculum. More direct interventions include promoting the utilisation of part-time work and internships as valuable experiences which can be used for self-learning, offering more work integrated learning programmes, and encouraging extra-curricular activities. An important feature is encouraging students to explore in depth by asking them to seek work experience more aligned to their degree subjects, rather than solely relying on generic part time work. Such initiatives may assist students to mature more readily in relation to their career identity before the GTW.

Fourth, this article responds to Hoyer's (2020) call for more research on the impacts of boundaryless and protean careers on career identity. Cohort and social forces perspectives on generation tend to emphasise the stability of identities over time, and most generational studies have measured cohorts' work values using cross-sectional samples of undergraduates or graduates about to enter the workplace. Findings here resonate more with literature on the fluidity of identity. Participants here extended the learning experience through the accumulation of additional work experiences,

giving rise to increases in intrinsic motivation and fluctuations in self-awareness. Given the prevalence of boundaryless career paths, they engaged in recurrent mini-cycles of growth and exploration throughout their careers (e.g. Super 1980; Savickas 2012). Consequently, identity exploration and development are ongoing cyclical processes (Grotevant 1987; Luyckx et al. 2011). Organisations might be hard pressed to plan appropriate engagement and retention initiatives for younger generations of graduates whose career identities are essentially fluid. Individually, it is plausible younger generations of graduates might experience perpetual liminality, and unfortunately for some, this might come with recurrent existential crises.

Limitations

The small scale of this study was designed to be exploratory, and so claims of generalisability cannot be made. More studies with larger samples are required. Longitudinal studies utilising more than two points in time would also pinpoint fluctuations in career values and motivations along with their triggers. Given that Generation Z are now entering the GTW, there are presently opportunities for longitudinal studies to track such changes rather than rely on retrospective accounts. A particular area of interest would be to investigate how younger generations form their expectations of work as students, and the factors influencing participants' willingness to engage in exploration before and after the GTW. Moreover, the present study's participants indicated that identity work was ongoing, even for those who graduated over ten years ago. Further studies on younger generations might, therefore, review whether Arnett's (2000) range of emerging adulthood requires extending to those beyond their 20s, and what the practical implications of this might be.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Kathryn (Kate) A. Boyle is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Glasgow Caledonian University. Her research interests include organisational behaviour, more specifically identity in the workplace, employee relations and workplace bullying.

ORCID

Kathryn A. Boyle http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2244-4334

References

Adams, G.R., and S.K. Marshall. 1996. "A Developmental Social Psychology of Identity: Understanding the Person-in-Context." *Journal of Adolescence* 19 (5): 429–442. doi:10.1006/jado.1996.0041.

Alvesson, M. 2010. "Self-Doubters, Strugglers, Storytellers, Surfers and Others: Images of Self-Identities in Organization Studies." *Human Relations* 63 (2): 193–217. doi:10.1177/0018726709350372.

Anderson, K.L., and N.S. Mounts. 2012. "Searching for the Self: An Identity Control Theory Approach to Triggers of Occupational Exploration." *The Journal of Genetic Psychology: Research and Theory on Human Development* 173 (1): 90–111. doi:10.1080/00221325.2011.573027.

Arnett, J.J. 2000. "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties." *American Psychologist* 55 (5): 469–480. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469.

Arthur, M.B., S.N. Khapova, and J. Richardson. 2016. *An Intelligent Career: Taking Ownership of Your Work and Your Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ashforth, B.E., and A.M. Saks. 1995. "Work-Role Transitions: A Longitudinal Examination of the Nicholson Model." *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 68 (2): 157–175. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8325.1995.tb00579.x.

Atewologun, D., R. Kutzer, E. Doldor, D. Anderson, and R. Sealy. 2017. "Individual-Level Foci of Identification at Work: A Systematic Review of the Literature." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 19 (3): 273–295. doi:10.1111/ijmr.12148.

Beech, N. 2017. "Identity at Work: An Enquiry-Based Approach to Therapeutically Inspired Management." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 19 (3): 357–370. doi:10.1111/ijmr.12151.

Berzonsky, M.D. 2011. "A Social-Cognitive Perspective on Identity Construction." In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, edited by S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, and V.L. Vignoles, 55–76. New York: Springer.

Borg, E., and J. Söderlund. 2015. "Liminality Competence: An Interpretative Study of Mobile Project Workers' Conception of Liminality at Work." *Management Learning* 46 (3): 260–279. doi:10.1177/1350507613516247.

Bosley, S.L.C., J. Arnold, and L. Cohen. 2009. "How Other People Shape Our Careers: A Typology Drawn from Career Narratives." *Human Relations* 62 (10): 1487–1520. doi:10.1177/0018726709334492.

Broadbridge, A.M., G.A. Maxwell, and S.M. Ogden. 2007. "Students' Views of Retail Employment – Key Findings from Generation Ys." *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 35 (12): 982–992. doi:10.1108/09590550710835210.

Brown, A.D. 2015. "Identities and Identity Work in Organizations." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 17 (1): 20–40. doi:10.1111/ijmr.12035.

Budtz-Jørgensen, J, C.G. Johnsen, and B.M. Sorensen. 2019. "Against Boundarylessness: The Liminal Career of the Flexible Employee." *Organization* 26 (6): 917–935. doi:10.1177/1350508418821005.

Buhler, C., and M. Allen. 1972. *Introduction to Humanistic Psychology*. Monterey, CA.: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Dunkel, C.S., and J.C. Lavoie. 2005. "Ego-Identity and the Processing of Self-Relevant Information." *Self and Identity* 4 (4): 349–359. doi:10.1080/15298860500220542.

Fugate, M., A.J. Kinicki, and B.E. Ashforth. 2004. "Employability: A Psycho-Social Construct, Its Dimensions, and Applications." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 65 (1): 14–38. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.005.

Garrison, Y.L., K.-H. Lee, and S.R. Ali. 2017. "Career Identity and Life Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Tolerance for Uncertainty and Positive/Negative Affect." *Journal of Career Development* 44 (6): 516–529. doi:10.1177/0894845316668410.

Gbadamosi, G., C. Evans, K. Jones, and H. Rudley. 2019. ""The Perceived Value of Work Placements and Part-Time Work and Its Diminution with Time." *Journal of Education and Work* 32 (2): 196–214. doi:10.1080/13639080.2019.1616282.

Grotevant, H.D. 1987. "Toward a Process Model of Identity Formation." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 2 (3): 203–222. doi:10.1177/074355488723003.

Hansen, J.-I. C., and M.E. Leuty. 2012. "Work Values Across Generations." *Journal of Career Assessment* 20 (1): 34–52. doi:10.1177/1069072711417163.

Hoekstra, H.A. 2011. "A Career Roles Model of Career Development." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 78 (2): 159–173. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2010.09.016.

Hoyer, P. 2020. "Career Identity: An Ongoing Narrative Accomplishment." In *The Oxford Handbook of Identities in Organizations*, edited by A. Brown, 101–116. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hurst, J.L., and L.K. Good. 2009. "Generation Y and Career Choice: The Impact of Retail Career Perceptions, Expectations and Entitlement Perceptions." *Career Development International* 14 (6): 570–893. doi:10.1108/13620430910997303.

Ibarra, H., and J.L. Petriglieri. 2010. "Identity Work and Play." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 23 (1): 10–25. doi:10.1108/09534811011017180.

Ibarra, H., and R. Barbulescu. 2010. "Identity as Narrative: Prevalence, Effectiveness, and Consequences of Narrative Identity Work in Macro Work Role Transitions." *Academy of Management Review* 35 (1): 135–154.

Ibarra., H. 1999. "Provisional Selves: Experimenting with Image and Identity in Professional Adaptation." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44 (4): 764–791. doi:10.2307/2667055.

Jackson, D., and M. Tomlinson. 2019. "Career Values and Proactive Career Behaviour among Contemporary Higher Education Students." *Journal of Education and Work* 32 (5): 449–464. doi:10.1080/13639080.2019.1679730.

Jackson, D., and R. Bridgstock. 2019. "Evidencing Student Success and Career Outcomes among Business and Creative Industries Graduates." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 41 (5): 451–467. doi:10.1080/1360080X.2019.1646377.

Jin, J., and J. Rounds. 2012. "Stability and Change in Work Values: A Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 80 (2): 326–339. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2011.10.007.

Johnson, M.K., and M.A. Monserud. 2012. "Work Value Development from Adolescence to Adulthood." *Advances in Life Course Research* 17 (2): 45–58. doi:10.1016/j.alcr.2012.02.002.

Krahn, H.J., and N.L. Galambos. 2014. "Work Values and Beliefs of 'Generation X' and 'Generation Y'." *Journal of Youth Studies* 17 (1): 92–112. doi:10.1080/13676261.2013.815701.

Kuron, L.K.J., S.T. Lyons, L. Schweitzer, and E.S.W. Ng. 2015. "Millenials' Work Values: Differences across the School to Work Transition." *Personnel Review* 44 (6): 991–1009. doi:10.1108/PR-01-2014-0024.

Laird, M.D., P. Harvey, and J. Lancaster. 2015. "Accountability, Entitlement, Tenure, and Satisfaction in Generation Y." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 30 (1): 87–100. doi:10.1108/JMP-08-2014-0227.

LaPointe, K. 2010. "Narrating Career, Positioning Identity: Career Identity as a Narrative Practice." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 77 (1): 1–9. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2010.04.003.

Laughland-Booy, J., P. Newcombe, and Z. Skrbis. 2017. "Looking Forward: Career Identity Formation and the Temporal Orientations of Young Australians." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 101: 43–56. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2017.04.005.
Lincoln, Y.S., and E.G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. London: Sage.
Luscombe, J., I. Lewis, and H.C. Biggs. 2013. "Essential Elements for Recruitment and Retention: Generation Y." *Education and Training* 56 (3): 272–290. doi:10.1108/00400911311309323.
Luyckx, K., S.J. Scwartz, L. Goosens, W. Beyers, and L. Missotten. 2011. "Processes of Personal Identity Formation and Evaluation." In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, edited by S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, and V.L. Vignoles, 77–98. New York: Springer.
Luyckx, K., and W. Beyers. 2015. "Ruminative Exploration and Reconsideration of Commitment as Risk Factors for Suboptimal Identity Development in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood." *Journal of Adolescence* 47: 169–178. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.10.018.
Luyckz, K., and C. Robitschek. 2014. "Personal Growth Initiative and Identity Formation in Adolescence through Young Adulthood: Mediating Processes on the Pathway to Well-Being." *Journal of Adolescence* 37 (7): 973–981. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2014.07.009.
Lyons, S., and L. Kuron. 2014. "Generational Differences in the Workplace: A Review of the Evidence and Directions for Future Research." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 35 (1): 139–157. doi:10.1002/job.1913.
Lyons, S.T., E.S. Ng, and L. Schweitzer. 2012. "Generational Career Shift: Millennials and the Changing Nature of Careers in Canada." In *Managing the New Workforce: International Perspectives in the Millennial Generation*, edited by S.T. Lyons and L. Schweitzer, 64–85. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
Lysova, E.I., J. Richardson, S.N. Khapova, and P.G.W. Jansen. 2015. "Change-Supportive Employee Behavior: A Career Identity Explanation." *Career Development International* 20 (1): 38–62. doi:10.1108/CDI-03-2014-0042.
Maitlis, S., T.J. Vogus, and T.B. Lawrence. 2013. "Sensemaking and Emotion in Organizations." *Organizational Psychology Review* 3 (3): 222–247. doi:10.1177/2041386613489062.
Mannheim, K. 1952. "The Problem of Generations." In *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by P. Kecskemti, 276–322. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Manzoni, A., J.K. Vermunt, R. Luijkx, and R. Muffels. 2010. "Memory Bias in Retrospectively Collected Employment Careers: A Model-Based Approach to Correct for Measurement Error." *Sociological Methodology* 40 (1): 39–73. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9531.2010.01230.x.
Marcia, J.E. 1966. "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (5): 551–558. doi:10.1037/h0023281.
Markus, H., and Nerius, P. 1986. "Possible Selves." *American Psychologist* 41 (9):954–969. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954
Maxwell, G.A., and A. Broadbridge. 2014. "Generation Y Graduates and Career Transition: Perspectives by Gender." *European Management Journal* 32 (4): 547–553. doi:10.1016/j.emj.2013.12.002.
Maxwell, G.A., and A. Broadbridge. 2017. "Generation Y's Employment Expectations: UK Undergraduates' Opinions on Enjoyment, Opportunity and Progression." *Studies in Higher Education* 42 (12): 2267–2283. doi:10.1080/03075079.2016.1141403.
McArdle, S., L. Waters, J.P. Briscoe, and D.T. Hall. 2007. "Employability during Unemployment: Adaptability, Career Identity and Human and Social Capital." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 71 (2): 247–264. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2007.06.003.
McCracken, M., D. Currie, and J. Harrison. 2016. "Understanding Graduate Recruitment, Development and Retention for the Enhancement of Talent Management: Sharpening 'The Edge' of Graduate Talent." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 27 (22): 2727–2752. doi:10.1080/09585192.2015.1102159.
McIlveen, P., and W. Patton. 2007. "Dialogical Self: Author and Narrator of Career Life Themes." *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* 7 (2): 67–80. doi:10.1007/s10775-007-9116-6.
Meijers, F., and R. Lengelle. 2012. "Narratives at Work: The Development of Career Identity." *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* 40 (2): 157–176. doi:10.1080/03069885.2012.665159.
Ng, E.S.W., L. Schweitzer, and S.T. Lyons. 2010. "New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation." *Journal of Business Psychology* 25 (2): 281–292. doi:10.1007/s10869-010-9159-4.
Nicholson, N., and J. Arnold. 1991. "From Expectation to Experience: Graduates Entering a Large Corporation." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 12 (5): 413–429. doi:10.1002/job.4030120506.
Nicholson, N. 1987. "The Transition Cycle: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Change and Human Resources Management." In *Personnel and Human Resource Management*, Vol. 5, edited by J. Ferris, and K.M. Rowland. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
Okay-Somerville, B., and D. Scholarios. 2014. "Coping with Career Boundaries and Boundary-Crossing in the Graduate Labour Market." *Career Development International* 19 (6): 668–682. doi:10.1108/CDI-12-2013-0144.
Parry, E., and P. Urwin. 2011. "Generational Differences in Work Values: A Review of Theory and Evidence." *International Journal of Management Review* 13 (1): 79–96. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2370.2010.00285.x.
Praskova, A., P.A. Creed, and M. Hood. 2015. "Career Identity and the Complex Mediating Relationships between Career Preparatory Actions and Career Progress Markers." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 87: 145–153. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2015.01.001.
Queiri, A., Yusoff, W.F.W., and Dwaikat, N. 2014. "Generation-Y Employees' Turnover: Work-Values Fit Perspective." *International Journal of Business and Management* 9 (11): 199–213. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v9n11p199

Ryder, N. 1965. "The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change." *American Sociological Review* 30 (6): 843–861. doi:10.2307/2090964.

Savickas, M.L. 1999. "The Transition from School to Work: A Developmental Perspective." *The Career Development Quarterly* 47 (4): 326–336. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.1999.tb00741.x.

Savickas, M.L. 2012. "Life Design: A Paradigm for Career Intervention in the 21st Century." *Journal of Counselling and Development* 90 (1): 13–19. doi:10.1111/j.1556-6676.2012.00002.x.

Schein, E.H. 1978. *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Sin, C., O. Tavares, and A. Amaral. 2019. "Accepting Employability as a Purpose of Higher Education? Academics' Perceptions and Practices." *Studies in Higher Education* 44 (6): 920–931. doi:10.1080/03075079.2017.1402174.

Stringer, K.J., and J.L. Kerpelman. 2014. "Career Identity Among College Students." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 38 (4): 310–322. doi:10.1080/10668926.2010.544557.

Super, D.E. 1980. "A Life-Span, Life-Space Approach to Career Development." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 16 (3): 282–298. doi:10.1016/0001-8791(80)90056-1.

Sveningsson, S., and M. Alvesson. 2003. "Managing Managerial Identities: Organizational Fragmentation, Discourse and Identity Struggle." *Human Relations* 56 (10): 1163–1193. doi:10.1177/00187267035610001.

Tomlinson, M. 2012. "Graduate Employability: A Review of Conceptual and Empirical Themes." *Higher Education Policy* 25 (4): 407–431. doi:10.1057/hep.2011.26.

Twenge, J.M. 2010. "A Review of the Empirical Evidence on Generational Differences in Work Attitudes." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25 (2): 201–210. doi:10.1007/s10869-010-9165-6.

Tymon, A. 2013. "The Student Perspective on Employability." *Studies in Higher Education* 38 (6): 841–856. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.604408.